

## What's New In Entrepreneurial Marketing? A Systematic Literature Review, Thematic Synthesis, And Future Research Agenda

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### ABSTRACT

*Purpose: This study aims to identify what is new in entrepreneurial marketing (EM) through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), thematic synthesis, and a future research agenda for strengthening EM among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Methodology: An SLR with thematic synthesis of recent literature was conducted by examining seven core elements: proactiveness, opportunity focus, innovativeness, calculated risk-taking, resource leveraging, customer intensity, and value creation. Findings: The synthesis reveals several developments, including the extension of EM dimensions toward networking capability and digital literacy, positive effects on marketing performance through digital marketing and innovation, and persistent empirical gaps in emerging markets and longitudinal mixed-methods research. EM is crucial for MSME competitiveness; therefore, deeper research on the integration of digital technology, local wisdom, and innovative methodological designs is needed in future research agendas. Originality: The distinctiveness of this review lies in its comprehensive thematic synthesis of emerging trends, such as digital marketing capabilities and open innovation in entrepreneurial marketing, which addresses critical gaps identified in previous systematic reviews.*

### INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, the marketing landscape for MSMEs has changed fundamentally. Customer interactions, information search, transactions, and reputation building are now increasingly mediated by digital platforms, social media, and marketplaces. In this situation, the ability to recognize opportunities, experiment rapidly, and adjust offerings is no longer merely complementary; it has become a prerequisite for survival and growth. Accordingly, concepts emerging in marketing and entrepreneurship emphasize adaptability, innovation, and opportunity recognition as strategic imperatives for business continuity, particularly for MSMEs operating in dynamic environments with limited

resources. Unlike traditional marketing, which tends to be top-down, customer-driven, and formal in its planning, entrepreneurial marketing (EM) emphasizes bottom-up innovation, improvisation, and rapid responses to market uncertainty (Hidayati et al., 2025; Salqaura et al., 2025).

The urgency of EM has become more pronounced as MSMEs face simultaneous challenges: limited capital and human resources, high market turbulence, rapid shifts in customer behavior, and growing dependence on digital channels whose logic is often determined by platforms. Under these conditions, rigid and linear traditional marketing approaches are often inadequate. By contrast, EM offers a more flexible approach by emphasizing real-time adaptation, improvisation, and opportunity recognition, enabling MSMEs to maintain market visibility, build customer closeness, and respond to change at relatively efficient costs (Alkufahy et al., 2023; Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025; Manishimwe et al., 2022; Salqaura et al., 2025; Santoso & Rahayu, 2025). Therefore, EM is understood not only as a strategy for overcoming internal limitations but also as a marketing logic that is more appropriate for MSMEs in the digital economy, where creativity, networks, and low-cost strategies constitute key sources of competitiveness (Hidayati et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2023).

Historically, EM has developed since the late 1960s and gained formal recognition in 1982 through the International Council for Small Business and the American Marketing Association, which emphasized that entrepreneurial businesses have needs that differ from conventional marketing theories generally designed for large firms (Basha et al., 2023; Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025a; Hidayati et al., 2025; Manishimwe et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2023). Accordingly, the literature positions EM as a framework that is more responsive to market uncertainty through innovation, opportunity orientation, and the creative use of resources, including personal networks and informal marketing practices (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025a; Hidayati et al., 2025; Salqaura et al., 2025). At the dimensional level, the formulation of seven core elements--proactiveness, opportunity focus, innovativeness, calculated risk-taking, resource leveraging, customer intensity, and value creation--serves as an important foundation for measuring how EM operates and how it influences MSME performance. Based on this rationale, numerous studies conclude that EM can improve marketing performance and sustainability, particularly when MSMEs are able to convert creativity into resource-based advantage in dynamic market contexts (Hidayati et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025a).

However, the acceleration of digital business practices has not been fully matched by the development of scientific knowledge capable of explaining how EM works in contemporary contexts. Although EM literature has grown rapidly, previous studies have often viewed it conceptually and have frequently overlooked the mechanisms through which firms use open innovation and technology customization to create economic value (Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025a). In addition, empirical studies examining the long-term impact

of digital technology on EM strategy and overall business performance remain limited, especially in turbulent emerging markets (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025b; Hidayati et al., 2025; Risitano et al., 2025). Another gap is evident in the context of social entrepreneurship, where understanding remains limited regarding how EM is applied to improve social enterprise performance while integrating local wisdom, such as religiosity, and its implications for financial, social, and environmental performance (Salqaura et al., 2024).

From a methodological perspective, although case studies and surveys are widely used, longitudinal mixed-methods designs that combine quantitative analysis with in-depth ethnography remain relatively underexplored. Yet such designs have the potential to capture the dynamics of EM elements over time while clarifying causal mechanisms (Dhameria et al., 2021). Contextual application gaps are also visible in informal economies and micro-enterprise sectors in developing countries, where traditional marketing is less effective, as well as in specific sectors such as fisheries that face high market turbulence and therefore require EM strategy adaptation to strengthen resilience (Santoso & Rahayu, 2025; Zaid, 2022a). Furthermore, EM principles largely formulated in developed countries may not be fully relevant to MSMEs in developing countries in the digital era, particularly when cultural factors shape marketing strategies and outcomes (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025).

Based on these gaps, it is increasingly clear that understanding of EM in a digital-first landscape remains insufficient, especially amid increasingly complex technological environments and continuously evolving customer demands (Sam et al., 2025a). This condition underscores the urgency of this article: to provide a sharp synthesis of the latest EM themes while explaining the most relevant research agenda for the current MSME context. This is important because digital transformation does not automatically generate marketing advantage; its benefits emerge only when MSMEs are able to operationalize EM dimensions through digital marketing capabilities, digital literacy, and networking capabilities (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025; Zahara et al., 2023). At the same time, it is also important to expand the application of EM to social entrepreneurship by incorporating local wisdom, such as religiosity, so that marketing strategies not only promote economic viability but also strengthen social impact. Thus, research examining the specific mechanisms of EM in the context of MSME-specific digital adoption and the limited number of longitudinal studies becomes increasingly relevant (Pramono et al., 2025; Salqaura et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2023).

RQ1: What dominant themes characterize recent EM research?

RQ2: What research agenda is needed to advance EM theory and practice?

The main objective of this study is to examine the latest themes in EM and to formulate an agenda for advancing EM theory and practice.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Design

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review approach developed specifically for the field of entrepreneurship, with reporting guided by the PRISMA 2020 principles (Page et al.,

2021) to ensure transparency, replicability, and the quality of the literature synthesis (Mohsin et al., 2024). This approach has proven effective for identifying trends, gaps, and research agendas in previous studies (Malesu & Syrovátka, 2025; Shahmohammadi, 2022). The review protocol describes in detail the data sources, keyword strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, step-by-step screening process, and thematic synthesis procedures.

### **Data source and search period**

The search was conducted in the main database [www.scopus.com](http://www.scopus.com) for peer-reviewed journal articles published during the 2021-2025 period. The selection of this database follows best-practice recommendations for systematic literature reviews (Kraus et al., 2020). The search was carried out on November 15, 2025.

### **Keyword strategy**

The search string was designed through an initial exploration of [www.scopus.com](http://www.scopus.com) to identify key synonyms (Kraus et al., 2020), allowing EM in MSME/digital contexts to be covered broadly (Malesu & Syrovátka, 2025; Yadav & Bansal, 2021). The Boolean strategy followed PRISMA-Scopus best practices (Kraus et al., 2020; Page et al., 2021), using OR for term variations and AND for thematic intersections. The search string was applied with the filter ("EM" OR "entrepreneurship marketing" OR "marketing entrepreneurship" OR "entrepreneurial marketing orientation") AND ("SME" OR "small firm" OR "small business" OR "MSME").

### **Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

The inclusion criteria covered studies that placed EM as the main focus to ensure high thematic relevance (Kraus et al., 2020; Yadav & Bansal, 2021), consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, and followed PRISMA standards and best practices in systematic literature reviews, with an emphasis on quality and replicability (Kraus et al., 2020; Risitano et al., 2025), within the context of MSMEs/small businesses/startups/entrepreneurship. This focus was selected because EM is commonly applied to entities with limited resources and high market dynamics (Alkufahy et al., 2023; Yadav & Bansal, 2021), and because it includes concepts, mechanisms, outcomes, or boundary conditions associated with EM to support an in-depth analysis of its dimensions, processes, and practical applications.

The exclusion criteria were applied to maintain high standards of quality, transparency, and thematic relevance in accordance with PRISMA recommendations and best practices for SLRs in entrepreneurship. These criteria included studies that focused solely on entrepreneurial orientation, while ensuring that the main focus remained on EM and remained relevant to the context of MSMEs/small businesses/startups/entrepreneurs, because EM is generally applied to entities with resource constraints and high market dynamics.

### **Selection process**

All data were obtained solely from [www.scopus.com](http://www.scopus.com), and the selection process was conducted using Scopus filters. A search of article titles, abstracts, and keywords using the

keyword "EM" produced 600 documents at the identification stage. After the search was limited to the 2021-2025 period, the number decreased to 267 documents (333 excluded). The document-type filter "Article" retained 267 documents. Next, the publication-stage filter "Final" produced 267 documents (9 excluded), and the language filter "English" left 197 documents (70 excluded). Finally, the open-access filter produced 91 articles included as studies in the review (106 excluded).

To clarify the literature screening process used in this study, the article selection flow is presented in Figure 1.

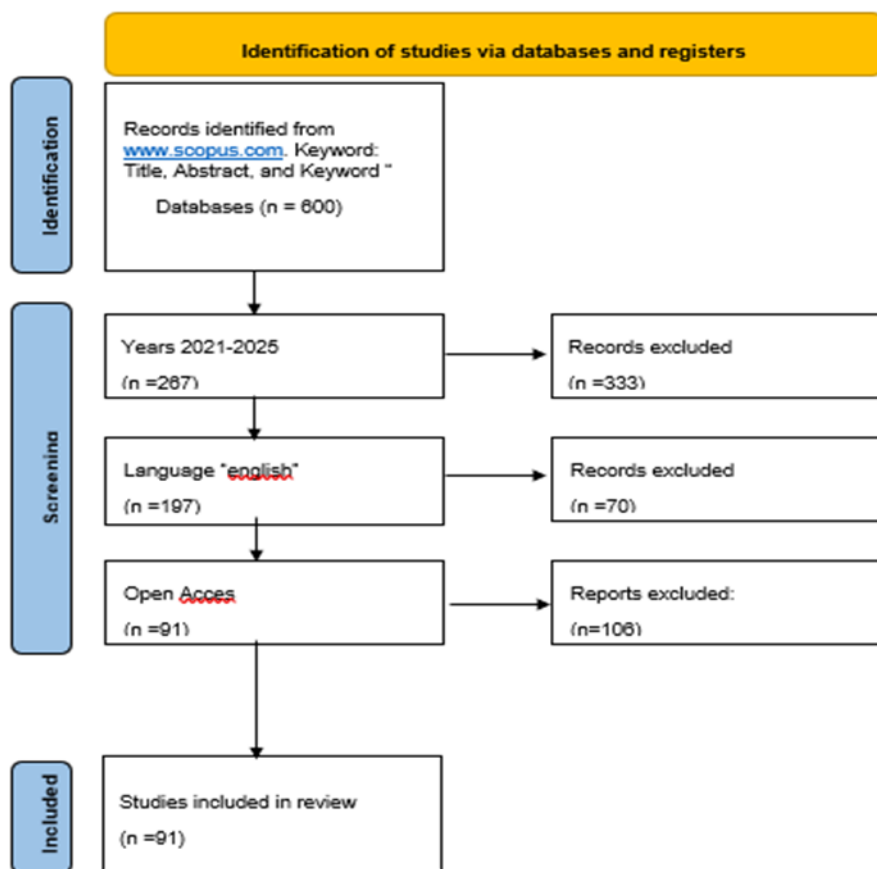


Figure 1. Flowchart of the systematic literature review

### Data extraction

Data were extracted systematically using a standardized form that had first been pilot-tested, following SLR best practices to ensure consistency, transparency, and support for a robust thematic synthesis (Mohsin et al., 2024; Risitano et al., 2025). The extraction fields focused on essential elements that enabled descriptive and thematic analysis, gap identification, and formulation of the future research agenda.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As an initial step in analyzing the review results, the distribution of articles by publication year is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of articles by year

Year	Documents
2025	30
2024	19
2023	22
2022	12
2021	8
2020	10

The publication distribution shows an increasing trend toward 2025. In 2021, eight documents were recorded, rising to 12 in 2022 and 22 in 2023. The year 2024 showed a slight decline to 19 documents, but in 2025 the number increased again to 30 documents, the highest figure in the dataset. By comparison, 10 documents were recorded in 2020. This pattern indicates that research interest has strengthened and reached its peak after the pandemic and the global wave of digitalization.

In addition to the temporal distribution, the distribution of publications by country of origin is also important for showing the concentration of EM research contributions. This information is presented in Figure 2.

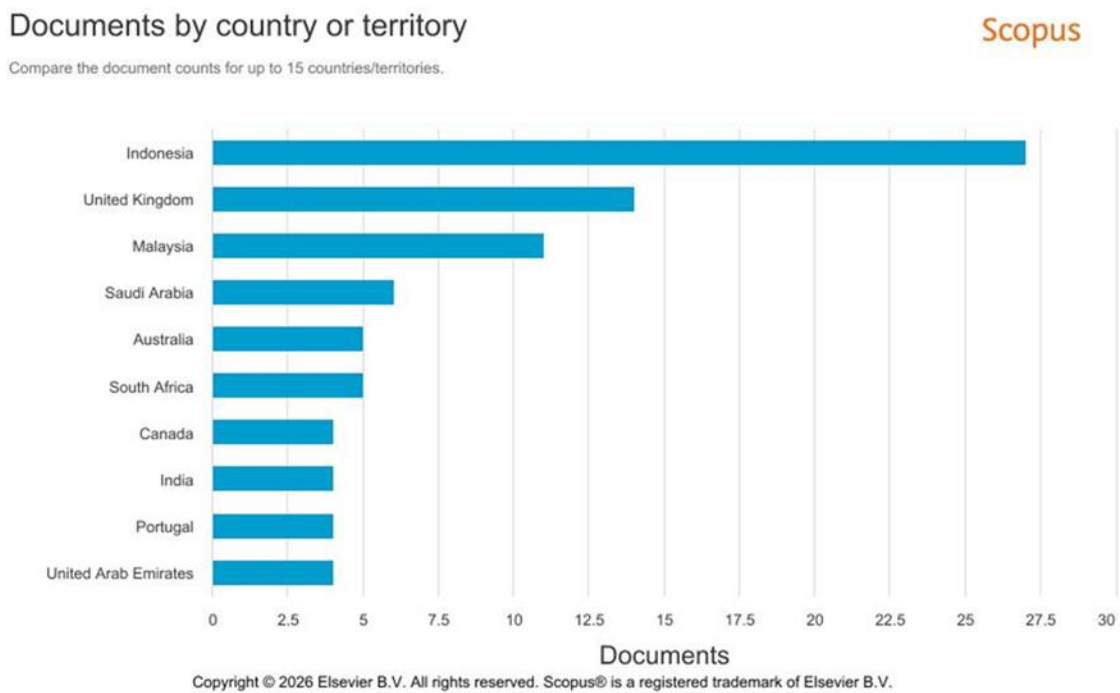


Figure 2. Distribution of articles by country

Based on Figure 2, Indonesia recorded the highest number of documents, at approximately 27. The United Kingdom ranked second with approximately 14 documents, followed by Malaysia with more than 10 documents. Meanwhile, other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Australia, South Africa, Canada, India, Portugal, and the United Arab Emirates made smaller contributions, with document counts ranging from 2 to 6. Overall, the graph illustrates the relative contribution of each country based on the number of Scopus-indexed publications.

### **Thematic synthesis**

Based on the VOSviewer map, "EM" appears as the most dominant central node and is closely related to "entrepreneurial orientation" and "market orientation", indicating that EM's conceptual foundation remains central. Several themes can be inferred from the VOSviewer map: (1) a digital-based EM theme, reflected in its connection with "technology customization" and "influencer marketing", which tend to appear in lighter colors (indicating newer topics) and point toward customer clusters such as "customer orientation" and "customer satisfaction"; (2) a theme of leveraging limited resources, visible in the context of "SMEs/MSMEs" and "emerging economies", supported by nodes such as "entrepreneurial finance" and "self-efficacy", reflecting MSME efforts to overcome constraints; (3) a theme of co-creation and customer/community engagement, seen in "value creation" and its proximity to customer-related nodes, confirming customer orientation as a source of learning and value creation; (4) a theme of EM as an experimental routine and decision-making logic, marked by "effectuation" (the most recent topic), indicating a focus on adaptive processes and effectual decision-making; (5) a prominent EM-innovation relationship through "innovation" and "innovation capability"; and (6) a performance and resilience theme, namely dominant outcomes that converge on "business performance", with "COVID-19" and "sustainability" serving as markers of resilience in turbulence.

To map the interconnections among concepts that emerge in the literature, the keyword network visualization using VOSviewer is presented in Figure 3.

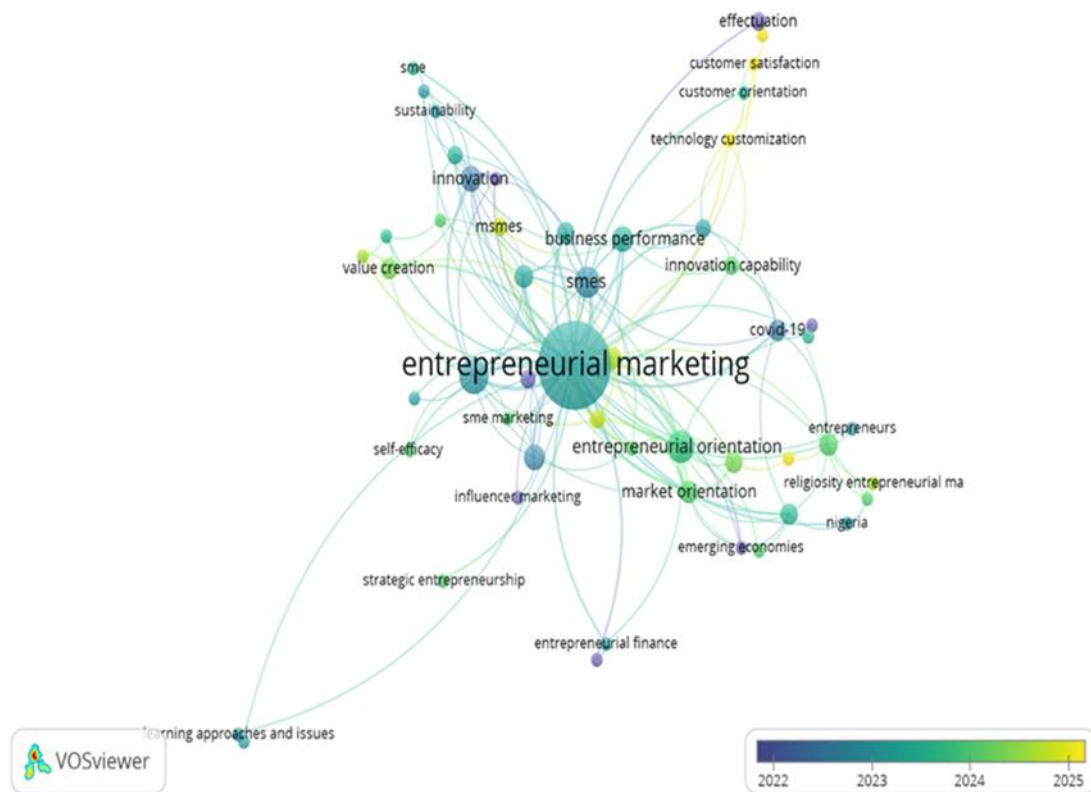


Figure 3. Entrepreneurial marketing map based on VOSviewer

### Theme 1. Digital-based entrepreneurial marketing (EM)

Recent EM emphasizes marketing practices through social media, marketplaces, and digital platforms for MSMEs/startups in the post-pandemic era (Alkufahy et al., 2023; Hidayati et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2023; Zahara et al., 2023). These digital platforms create opportunities for MSMEs to access global markets at low cost, innovate rapidly, and engage customers through social ties. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok Shop, Facebook, and online marketplaces enable MSMEs to conduct digital experimentation, strengthen engagement through online communities, and use analytics to create innovative opportunities and efficiently co-create products (Alkufahy et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2023; Zahara et al., 2023). This approach extends entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation by integrating networking capabilities and digital literacy into the context of digital EM (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025; Hidayati et al., 2025). MSMEs in Indonesia and Thailand use platforms for network collaboration, resource sharing, and adaptation to post-COVID market turbulence, thereby improving marketing performance through digital marketing capabilities (Hidayati et al., 2025; Zahara et al., 2023). Empirical evidence also shows that digital-based EM mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance through customer-centered innovation, efficient resource allocation, and responsiveness to consumer feedback (Zahara et al., 2023). However, platform dependence limits MSMEs' strategic

flexibility when algorithms change, global competition intensifies, and campaign metrics become increasingly complex (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025). Other risks include cybersecurity threats, information overload, and manipulative practices that erode customer trust in digital environments (Zahara et al., 2023). Further studies emphasize the need for digital literacy and data management to mitigate these risks. Overall, digital-based EM represents a shift from traditional marketing toward platform-mediated experimental routines and is crucial for MSME resilience in volatile ecosystems (Hidayati et al., 2025; Zahara et al., 2023). Nevertheless, research gaps remain in linking platform metrics (engagement analytics, digital KPIs) with business outcomes (marketing performance, resilience), understanding the impact of platform dependence on adaptation in turbulence, and addressing issues of trust, ethics, and the dark side of digital marketing (Zahara et al., 2023).

### **Theme 2. Leveraging limited resources**

MSMEs use bricolage through social networks, strategic partnerships, improvisation, and creativity to gain marketing advantages amid resource constraints, as captured in the resource leveraging dimension of the EM framework (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025; Munandar et al., 2025). This practice is important for MSMEs/startups in developing countries such as Indonesia because they can rely on high flexibility to collaborate in digital marketing, develop marketing innovation, and expand market access despite not yet having large or complex resources. A study of food MSMEs in Semarang shows that the integration of EM and digital marketing increases competitiveness by strengthening product value and market reach (Pujiastuti & Pantawis, 2025). Network ties and entrepreneurial creativity also mediate the path toward competitive advantage in various MSME contexts (Dhameria et al., 2021; Hasanah et al., 2025). This approach aligns with the evolution of EM in the digital era, in which resource-constrained MSMEs use entrepreneurial orientation to adapt to turbulence through digital agility and digital EM bricolage (Hidayati et al., 2025; Pramono et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2023). Empirical evidence confirms that EM drives better business performance in system-integrator startups through technology customization and innovation capability. However, MSMEs also face challenges, including dependence on external networks, weak coordination of digital resources, and variation in effectiveness across industries/sectors (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025). Overall, effective resource leveraging is at the heart of EM resilience for MSMEs in volatile ecosystems (Hasanah et al., 2025). Further research needs to clarify measurement standards for resource leveraging, strengthen cross-context comparisons, and test digital resource integration more systematically.

### **Theme 3. Co-creation with customers/communities**

MSMEs and startups treat customers and communities as strategic marketing assets by co-creating value, delivering authentic stories, building intensive relationships, and learning quickly from customers through digital platforms (Sam et al., 2025a; Zahara et al., 2023). MSMEs/startups in developing countries such as Indonesia use social media and online communities to co-create innovative products, build authentic engagement, and iterate rapidly

based on customer feedback in the post-pandemic era, thereby strengthening customer intensity and value creation within EM dimensions (Hidayati et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2023; Zahara et al., 2023). This practice also increases customer satisfaction through personal relationships and authentic narratives, as MSMEs integrate social ties to strengthen loyalty and customer lifetime value (Alkufahy et al., 2023; Pramono et al., 2025).

This approach is consistent with the evolution of digital EM because customer-centered orientation is essential for adapting to turbulence through learning loops and collaborative relationships (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025b; Sam et al., 2025). Empirical evidence shows that customer engagement mediates the relationship between EM and marketing performance, with an emphasis on retention, satisfaction, and conversion into cash flow through customer-centered innovation (Pramono et al., 2025; Zahara et al., 2023). However, MSMEs also face significant risks, including negative eWOM due to manipulative content, information overload, and variations in effectiveness across cultures and product categories, all of which affect customer trust. Overall, customer co-creation is a pillar of EM resilience for MSMEs in volatile ecosystems (Hidayati et al., 2025; Zahara et al., 2023). Future research needs to explain the mechanisms through which engagement turns into loyalty and cash flow, strengthen strategies for managing negative eWOM risk, and test the roles of culture and product category as differentiating factors.

#### **Theme 4. EM as an experimental routine**

Modern EM is understood as a dynamic routine that includes rapid experimentation, strategic pivoting, affordable-loss principles, and process adaptation in VUCA environments. Modern EM emphasizes an effectual, improvisational, and risk-tolerant decision-making approach (Hidayati et al., 2025). The focus of EM has shifted from a static orientation toward transformative practices and processes that enable rapid adaptation for resource-constrained MSMEs (Hidayati et al., 2025; Pramono et al., 2025). Empirical evidence shows that experimental routines stimulate innovation through customer-centered orientation and collaborative learning. However, modern EM also faces challenges, including weak process coordination and variations in effectiveness across implementation contexts. Overall, EM routines are a pillar of resilience for MSMEs in volatile ecosystems (Hidayati et al., 2025). Further research is needed to develop dynamic measures of decision-making logic, provide process evidence from idea generation to testing, and examine the roles of founder and team cognition as determinants (Sam et al., 2025).

#### **Theme 5. The relationship between EM and innovation**

Recent studies link EM with innovation through market sensing, customer learning, and offering iteration driven by innovative experimentation and customer-centered orientation (Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025b; Zahara et al., 2023). EM acts as a key antecedent of innovation capability among Indonesian MSMEs/startups in emerging markets because EM encourages knowledge exchange, collaborative learning, and the conversion of market insights into new offerings within the framework of digital EM evolution (Yang et al., 2023).

Empirical evidence confirms that EM has a positive impact on innovation in manufacturing MSMEs and system-integrator startups, even amid turbulence such as the pandemic, with technology customization serving as a mediating mechanism (Siriyota, 2025).

However, studies also identify various challenges, including contradictory evidence in stable industries, limited research on mediators such as innovation capability, and sectoral boundary conditions in testing the EM-innovation relationship (Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025). Overall, the link between EM and innovation is an important pillar of resilience for MSMEs in volatile ecosystems (Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025). Future research needs to distinguish among types of innovation (product, process, and marketing), clarify the causal direction of EM's influence on innovation, and test cross-sectoral and contextual differences more comparatively.

### **Theme 6. Performance and resilience**

The impact of EM on performance depends on environmental turbulence, competitive intensity, and institutional context across various MSME situations (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025b; Hidayati et al., 2025). EM outcomes also go beyond financial aspects, including resilience and customer equity through value creation and customer intensity (Alkufahy et al., 2023; Zahara et al., 2023). Empirical evidence confirms that EM improves marketing performance among Indonesian MSMEs by driving innovation, building competitive advantage, and integrating digital capabilities, even during the pandemic and under VUCA conditions (Dhameria et al., 2021). However, research also points to challenges, including variations in effectiveness across sectors, inconsistent performance measures, and limited causal evidence and longitudinal studies in EM literature. Overall, the relationship with performance represents a pillar of resilience for MSMEs in volatile ecosystems (Hasanah et al., 2025). Further research needs to standardize performance measures, develop longitudinal studies to trace causal evolution, and identify sectoral and institutional boundary conditions more systematically (Hidayati et al., 2025).

### **Integrative framework**

Based on the thematic synthesis above, this study proposes an integrative framework that places antecedents, EM behaviors, mediating mechanisms, outcomes, and moderators in a coherent explanatory flow. This framework not only shows the relationships among components but also explains the direct and indirect pathways that shape MSME innovation, performance, and resilience. To make the relationships among model components easier to understand, the visualization of the proposed integrative framework is presented in Figure 4.

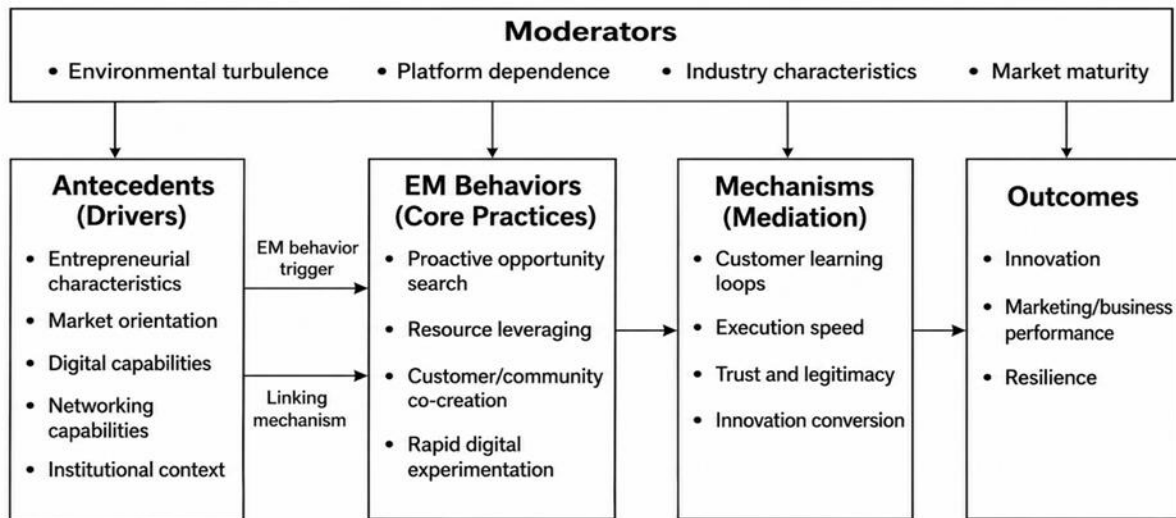


Figure 4. Proposed integrative framework

As a synthesis of the main findings, Table 2 summarizes the components, indicators, and role of each element in the proposed integrative framework.

Table 2. Proposed integrative framework

Framework Component	Key Subdimensions/Indicators	Role in the Model	Sources
Antecedents (Drivers)	Entrepreneurial characteristics Market orientation Digital capabilities Networking capabilities Institutional context	Triggering factors that shape the emergence of EM behavior	(Dhameria et al., 2021; Hidayati et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025)
EM Behavior (Core Practices)	Proactive opportunity search (market sensing, opportunity focus) Resource leveraging (creative optimization of limited resources) Customer/community co-creation (customer intensity, digital collaboration) Rapid digital experimentation (iterative and risk-tolerant)	EM practices that bridge antecedents and outcomes	(Hidayati et al., 2025; Munandar et al., 2025; Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025a; Yang et al., 2023; Zahara et al., 2023)
Mechanisms (Mediation)	Customer learning loops Execution speed Trust/legitimacy Innovation conversion	Explain how EM behavior generates outcomes	(Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025b)

Outcomes	Innovation Performance (marketing/business) Resilience	Main outcomes targeted by the framework	(Hidayati et al., 2025; Pramono et al., 2025; Zahara et al., 2023)
Moderators	Environmental turbulence Platform dependence Industry characteristics Market maturity	Strengthen or weaken the relationships among components	(Hidayati et al., 2025; Pramono et al., 2025; Zahara et al., 2023)

As shown in Figure 4 and Table 2, EM behavior in MSMEs is shaped by a set of antecedents, namely entrepreneurial characteristics, market orientation, digital capabilities, networking capabilities, and institutional context (Dhameria et al., 2021a; Hidayati et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025). These drivers give rise to EM practices in the form of proactive opportunity search through market sensing and opportunity focus, resource leveraging to creatively optimize constraints, customer/community co-creation through customer intensity and digital collaboration, and rapid digital experimentation that is iterative and risk-tolerant (Pramono et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2023; Zahara et al., 2023). These practices operate through mechanisms such as customer learning loops, execution speed, trust/legitimacy, and innovation conversion to produce outcomes in the form of innovation, performance, and resilience. The effectiveness of these relationships is influenced by boundary conditions such as environmental turbulence, platform dependence, industry characteristics, and market maturity.

**Future research agenda**

Future research needs to explore more deeply the dynamics of interaction among EM drivers, behaviors, mechanisms, outcomes, and boundary conditions in order to strengthen and refine the proposed framework. EM literature also shows significant diversity in the definition and dimensions of the construct. Some studies adopt the seven main dimensions proposed by Morris et al., namely proactiveness, opportunity focus, innovativeness, calculated risk-taking, customer intensity, resource leveraging, and value creation (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025; Munandar et al., 2025), while other studies use eight dimensions by adding network attention (Zaid, 2022). This variation creates measurement inconsistency and sometimes produces contradictory empirical findings, such as non-significant or even negative effects of EM in stable industries (Pramono et al., 2025). Further analysis shows that this diversity is rooted in the conceptual evolution of EM: EM is understood as a strategic orientation (entrepreneurial/market orientation) (Hidayati et al., 2025), as a transformative capability for dynamic adaptation in resource-constrained organizations, or as a practice/routine based on experimentation. In the digital era and in the context of Indonesian MSMEs, limited scale validation further widens the empirical gap, including contradictory findings regarding the mediating role of digital marketing capabilities. Therefore, future research needs to clarify conceptual distinctions and develop contextually validated measures

of digital EM (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025; Sam et al., 2025). Based on this discussion, several agendas for future research are as follows:

### **1. Mechanisms in the digital era**

Experimental routines in EM (Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025; Zahara et al., 2023) are supported by customer learning loops and execution speed, and are strengthened by the mediating roles of innovation capability and technology customization among MSMEs and startups amid turbulence such as the pandemic (Hidayati et al., 2025; Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025). However, empirical evidence remains limited to general measures of marketing performance, and research also shows contradictions in stable industries as well as a lack of causal studies that measure processes from idea generation to scale-up (Hanaysha & Al-Shaikh, 2022; Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025a; Zahara et al., 2023). Meanwhile, dependence on digital platforms can strengthen EM effectiveness through digitalization affordances such as algorithms and APIs for task control, as well as network collaboration through social media and online communities, thereby improving proactiveness, resource leveraging, and value creation (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025; Yang et al., 2023). This condition also facilitates market sensing, rapid iteration, and adaptation in volatile ecosystems. Conversely, excessive platform dependence can weaken EM performance because of cybersecurity risks, information overload, and system failures, especially among MSMEs with low digital literacy. Boundary conditions such as environmental turbulence and market maturity determine the threshold of effectiveness; therefore, longitudinal research is needed to identify optimal pathways and examine the role of founder cognition in the dynamics of digital EM (Hidayati et al., 2025; Pramono et al., 2025; Raouf & Esmaeel, 2025; Sam et al., 2025a; Sulaiman et al., 2024). Overall, strengthening these mechanisms is crucial for EM resilience in Indonesia's digital era.

### **2. Context expansion**

Infrastructure quality influences EM in agribusiness/rural MSMEs, the strength of local networks, and ecosystem support in rural areas, ultimately determining the breadth of market access and MSMEs' ability to develop marketing (Dhameria et al., 2021). Traditional weaving MSMEs in rural Bali, such as those in Karangasem, face limitations in digital infrastructure, brand management, and market access. However, these MSMEs overcome such barriers through a digital-based EM approach that expands marketing networks and strengthens the local ecosystem. Networking capability also plays an important role for embroidery MSMEs in Tasikmalaya because it supports EM practices that create competitive advantage in a semi-rural context. Comparisons between developing and developed countries show that institutional constraints, trust, logistics, and market access shape EM effectiveness differently (Alkufahy et al., 2023; Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025b; Sam et al., 2025). EM in developing countries such as Jordan and Indonesia requires strong institutional support to overcome structural barriers, and differences in outcomes across contexts confirm that EM principles from developed countries are not always universal. Cross-cultural validation also confirms

variation in EM performance due to institutional factors, because capability-mediated models tend to be more effective in developed countries. At the same time, studies in Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Nigeria highlight similar challenges in developing-country contexts.

### 3. Methodological strengthening

Research methods can be strengthened through innovative approaches that address the limitations of cross-sectional designs, which still dominate EM literature, because such designs often create causal bias and fail to capture temporal dynamics (Sam et al., 2025). Longitudinal designs, for example, allow researchers to observe the evolution of EM from the startup stage to growth and scale-up, making it easier to test temporal precedence and track changes in dynamic capabilities such as technology customization and innovation capability to confirm long-term causal relationships (Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025). In addition, configurational approaches such as Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) help researchers identify multiple equifinal pathways toward high performance because they are able to capture the complexity of interactions between EM factors and boundary conditions, such as market turbulence, that are difficult to explain using conventional linear models (Sam et al., 2025). Finally, quasi-experiments or field experiments on specific EM interventions, such as digital experimentation, provide stronger causal inference than observational studies, particularly when researchers test mediation and moderation mechanisms in the context of digital MSMEs (Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025).

### 4. Theoretical integration

The integration of EM with dynamic capability theory views EM as a meta-capability that facilitates the development of other capabilities, such as technology customization and innovation capability, because EM directs organizational routines to sense market opportunities, adapt technologies, and reconfigure resources in contexts of resource constraints and market turbulence (Alkufahy et al., 2023; Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025; Sam et al., 2025). This approach also extends the Resource-Based View framework by positioning EM as a dynamic capability that creates sustainable competitive advantage through opportunity creation, proactiveness, and value co-creation. In digital platform and community ecosystems, EM evolves by integrating new dimensions such as networking capability (for example, relational skills, network collaboration, and online communities) and digital literacy (the use of tools and technology adaptation), thereby moving beyond conventional dimensions such as entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation to address digital challenges in developing countries (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025; Yang et al., 2023). Digitalization affordances such as algorithms and APIs also strengthen resource leveraging and market-driving behavior through social and e-commerce platforms. Studies on EM microfoundations require deeper research into founder cognition, team composition, and organizational learning because these factors shape micro-macro interactions in the adaptation of digital MSMEs. For example, founder cognition interacts with bonding/bridging social ties that mediate

international digital entrepreneurial marketing. Meanwhile, diverse team composition supports collaboration, and organizational learning occurs through experimentation-based learning loops and knowledge exchange (Yang et al., 2023).

## Discussion

The synthesis shows that the novelty of EM research lies not only in the expansion of the concept but especially in a fundamental shift in emphasis: EM is no longer understood solely as a general position grounded in entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation, but as a set of experimental marketing routines mediated by digital platforms and online communities (Chooset & Sukhabot, 2025; Hidayati et al., 2025). Recent grounded-theory research also confirms the expansion of EM dimensions by incorporating networking capability and digital literacy to address digital challenges in developing countries, where social platforms and e-marketplaces facilitate opportunity creation, digital product co-creation, low-cost marketing, and stronger customer relationships through social media. This development is consistent with the evolution of EM as a dynamic meta-capability that uses digitalization affordances, such as algorithms and APIs, to strengthen resource leveraging, market sensing, and adaptation in volatile ecosystems, particularly for resource-constrained MSMEs (Sam et al., 2025a; Zahara et al., 2023). However, progress in the literature remains constrained by construct overlap, measurement inconsistency, and a lack of causal designs capable of capturing temporal processes and EM dynamics.

## Theoretical Implications

EM research requires construct clarification to address overlap with dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation (for example, proactiveness) and market orientation, fragmented definitions, and the lack of consensus on core EM dimensions. The literature also shows that EM measurement varies across studies and that its empirical validation remains limited, reinforcing the need for further research to standardize reliable and context-specific scales. Mechanism testing also needs to be strengthened by evaluating the mediating roles of factors such as technology customization and innovation capability, as well as testing boundary conditions that may moderate the strength of the relationship between EM and outcomes. To reduce cross-sectional design bias and explain empirical contradictions, future research needs to use more rigorous causal designs, such as longitudinal studies, fsQCA, or experiments (Pramono et al., 2025; Sam et al., 2025). From a practical perspective, MSMEs can operationalize EM through rapid experimentation routines, customer/community co-creation, network leveraging, and digital metrics that are directly linked to business outcomes.

## Managerial Implications

MSMEs can operationalize EM through daily routines that have proven effective, namely by conducting rapid experiments to stimulate innovation and dynamic adaptation. MSMEs can also co-create value with customers through digital platforms. In addition, MSMEs can use collaborative networks to leverage resources and expand markets. Finally,

MSMEs can measure digital metrics, such as marketing performance KPIs that are directly linked to business outcomes, including revenue and customer satisfaction (Hidayati et al., 2025; Tolossa et al., 2024; Zahara et al., 2023).

### **Policy Implications**

Government assistance programs for MSMEs should prioritize the holistic strengthening of EM capacity, namely networking capability, digital literacy, entrepreneurial orientation, and market orientation, rather than merely providing training on the use of digital tools. Capacity-building initiatives in developing countries such as Indonesia and Thailand have proven more effective when programs combine continuous education and adaptive mentoring to address resource constraints, low digital literacy, and infrastructure challenges, compared with purely technical approaches that often fail to encourage long-term adaptation. Mentoring programs for weaving MSMEs in Bali, for example, show that training in entrepreneurship-based digital marketing strategies increases competitiveness and expands market access. This policy direction is also consistent with recommendations to strengthen inclusive support ecosystems because collaboration among government, universities, and the private sector can accelerate the development of managerial skills and innovation among MSMEs.

### **CONCLUSION**

Overall, this study emphasizes the urgency of strengthening EM capabilities as a key to MSME adaptation and growth in the digital era, while also highlighting the need for theoretical and methodological consensus to advance this field of inquiry. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies and mixed-methods designs to capture the temporal dynamics of EM and identify contextual factors that moderate its relationship with innovation performance and digital transformation. In addition, subsequent research should explore the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, in facilitating various EM dimensions and their impact on the global competitiveness of MSMEs. This is consistent with previous findings that digital marketing capabilities significantly affect MSME marketing performance. Future studies also need to examine how the integration of digital capabilities, particularly in networking and customer management, can improve resource adaptation and stakeholder connectivity among MSMEs. Future research should also consider the roles of digital literacy and economic literacy in strengthening MSME entrepreneurial capabilities, especially in the context of a dynamic tourism economy.

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